


MEMORANDUM

TO: Council, SSC and AP Members
FROM: Chris Oliver 
Executive Director
DATE: December 2, 2010
SUBJECT: Final GOA Groundfish Specifications for 2011 and 2012

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| ESTIMATED TIME 6 hours All C-7 Items |
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ACTION REQUIRED

Review and approve GOA SAFE report (including Ecosystem and Economic SAFEs) and approve final GOA Harvest Specifications for 2011-2012 including:

1. Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC), and annual Total Allowable Catch (TAC).
2. Prohibited Species Catch Limits

BACKGROUND

At this meeting, the Council makes final recommendations on groundfish and bycatch specifications as listed above to manage the 2011 and 2012 Gulf of Alaska (GOA) groundfish fisheries.

GOA SAFE Document

The groundfish Plan Teams met in Seattle November 15-19, 2010 to prepare the final SAFE reports and to review the status of groundfish stocks. The GOA SAFE report forms the basis for the recommended GOA groundfish specifications for the 2011 and 2012 fishing years. Note that there are three volumes to the SAFE report: a stock assessment volume, a fishery evaluation volume ("economic SAFE"), and an ecosystems considerations volume. The introduction to the GOA SAFE report was mailed to the Council and Advisory Panel in late November 2010. The full GOA SAFE report, the economic SAFE report and the ecosystem considerations volume were mailed to the SSC and are available as reference materials in the back of the Council, SSC and AP meeting rooms. The GOA Plan Team minutes are attached as Item C-7(b)(1). The Joint Plan Team minutes are included under the C-7(a) agenda item. An overview of the GOA SAFE report and ecosystem considerations volume will be provided to you at the meeting.

Two year OFL and ABC Determinations

Amendment 48/48 to the GOA and BSAI Groundfish FMPs, implemented in 2005, made two significant changes with respect to the stock assessment process. First, annual assessments are no longer required for rockfishes, flatfish, and Atka mackerel since new data during years when no groundfish surveys are conducted are limited. For example, since 2010 was an off-year for the NMFS GOA groundfish trawl survey, only summaries for these species are produced.

The second significant change is that the proposed and final specifications are to be specified for a period of up to two years. This requires providing ABC and OFL levels for 2011 and 2012. In the case of stocks

managed under Tier 3, 2011 and 2012 ABC and OFL projections are typically based on the output for Scenarios 1 or 2 from the standard projection model using assumed (best estimates) of actual catch levels. In off years (even years) in the case of stocks managed under Tiers 4-6, projections are set equal to the Plan Team's recommended values for the last full assessment presented.

The 2012 ABC and OFL values recommended in next year's SAFE report are likely to differ from this year's projections for 2012, for the same reasons that the 2011 projections in this SAFE report differ from the projected values from last year's SAFE report.

ACL amendments

Effective for the 2011 fisheries, management categories under the groundfish FMPs have been revised in Amendments 96 and 87 to the FMPs for Groundfish of the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands (BSAI) and Gulf of Alaska (GOA), respectively. This action was necessary to comply with requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) to prevent overfishing, achieve optimum yield, and to comply with statutory requirements for annual catch limits (ACLs) and accountability measures (AMs). Species and species groups must be identified "in the fishery" for which ACLs and AMs are required.

The effects of the action amended the GOA FMP to:

- 1) Identify and manage target groundfish stocks "in the fishery"
- 2) Eliminate the "other species" category and manage squids, sculpins, sharks, and octopuses separately "in the fishery";
- 3) Manage prohibited species and forage fish species in the ecosystem component category; and
- 4) Remove the non-specified species outside of the FMPs.

In this year's specifications process, separate specifications (OFL, ABC and TAC) will now be established for squid, sculpins, sharks and octopus. As such, full assessments are provided for those stocks despite 2010 being an 'off-year' for the GOA bottom trawl survey.

ABCs, TACs, and Apportionments

At this meeting, the Council will establish final catch specifications for the 2011 and 2012 fisheries. The SSC and AP recommendations will be provided to the Council during the meeting. Item C-7(b)(2) lists the 2010 specifications and catch (through November 6, 2010) and GOA Plan Team recommendations for OFLs and ABCs for 2011 and 2012. The sum of the preliminary 2011, 2012 ABCs for target species are 587,525 t (2011), 601,394 t (2012) which are within the FMP-approved optimum yield (OY) of 116,000 - 800,000 t for the Gulf of Alaska. The sum of 2011 and 2012 OFLs are 723,929 t and 743,424 t, respectively. Due to halibut bycatch mortality considerations in the high-biomass flatfish fisheries, an overall OY for 2011 will be considerably under this upper limit. For perspective, the sum of the 2010 TACs was 242,727 t, and the sum of the ABCs was 516,055 t.

The sum of the ABCs increased by 4% (22,026 t) compared with last year. This is primarily driven by increases in pollock 11,470 t (14%), Pacific cod 7,700 t (10%), sablefish 920 t (9%) and the aggregate total for squid, sculpins, sharks and octopus 4,130 t (58%). Based on projections, ABC levels decreased in rex sole 164 t (-2%) Arrowtooth flounder t (-2%), Pacific ocean perch (-3%), northern rockfish (-5%) and Pelagic shelf rockfish (-6%).

The abundances of Pacific cod, Dover sole, flathead sole, arrowtooth flounder, Pacific ocean perch, roughey and blackspotted rockfish, northern rockfish, and dusky rockfish are above target stock size. The abundances of pollock and sablefish are below target stock size. The target biomass levels for other deep-water flatfish, shallow-water flatfish, rex sole, shortraker rockfish, demersal shelf rockfish, other

pelagic shelf rockfish, other slope rockfish, thornyhead rockfish, Atka mackerel, skates, sculpins, squid, octopus, and sharks are unknown.

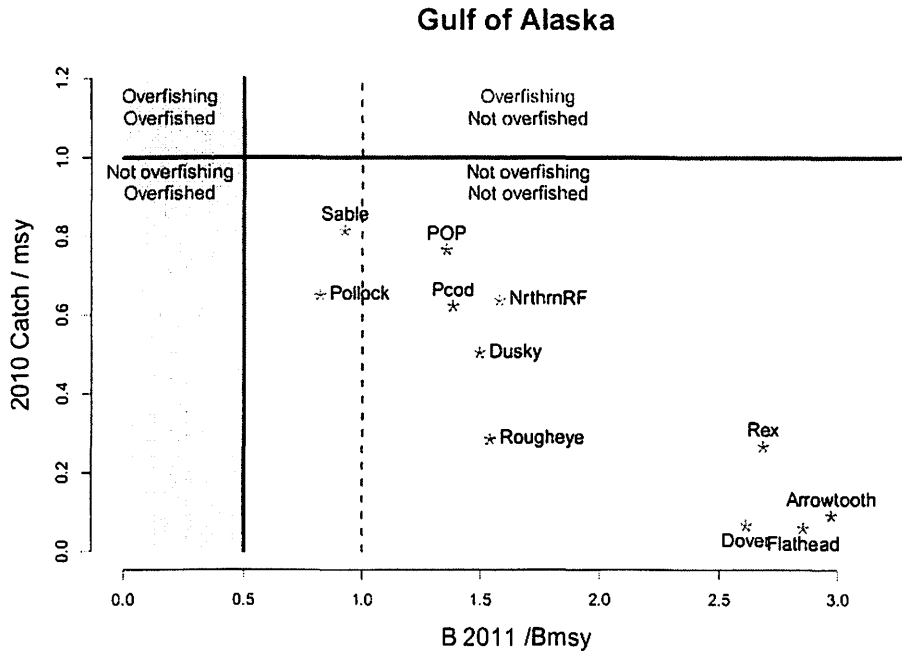


Figure 1. Summary status of age-structured GOA species relative to 2010 catch levels (vertical axis) and projected 2011 spawning biomass relative to B_{msy} levels. Note that the 2010 MSY level is defined as the 2010 catch at F_{OFL} .

TAC Considerations for State Pacific Cod Fishery

Since 1997, the Council has reduced the GOA Pacific cod TAC to account for removals of not more than 25% of the Federal P. cod TAC from the state parallel fisheries. The relative percentage in the Central GOA was increased by the Board of Fisheries in March 2005 from 24.25 in 2004 to 25% while the relative percentage in the Eastern GOA was increased to 25% in 2010. Using the area apportionments of the 2011 and 2012 P. cod ABC recommended by the Plan Team, the Federal TAC for P. cod would be adjusted as listed below.

Plan Team recommended 2011 Gulf of Alaska Pacific cod ABCs, and resulting TACs and state Guideline Harvest Levels (GHLs) (t).

| Specifications | Western | Central | Eastern | Total |
|----------------|---------|---------|---------|--------|
| ABC | 30,380 | 53,816 | 2,604 | 86,800 |
| State GHL | 7,595 | 13,454 | 651 | 21,700 |
| (%) | 25 | 25 | 25 | 25 |
| Federal TAC | 22,785 | 40,362 | 1,953 | 65,100 |

Plan Team recommended 2012 Gulf of Alaska Pacific cod ABCs, and resulting TACs and state Guideline Harvest Levels (GHLs) (t).

| Specifications | Western | Central | Eastern | Total |
|----------------|---------|---------|---------|--------|
| ABC | 27,370 | 48,484 | 2,346 | 78,200 |
| State GHL | 6,843 | 12,121 | 587 | 19,550 |
| (%) | 25 | 25 | 25 | 25 |
| Federal TAC | 20,528 | 36,363 | 1,760 | 58,650 |

Prohibited Species Catch Limits

In the GOA, Prohibited Species Catch (PSC) limits are established for halibut. Since 1995, total halibut PSC limits for all fisheries and gear types have totaled 2,300 t. This cap was reduced from 2,750 t after the sablefish IFQ fishery was exempted from the halibut PSC requirements in 1995. The halibut PSC apportionments recommended based upon the 2010 apportionments for the Gulf of Alaska groundfish fisheries are shown below.

GOA Pacific halibut PSC Limits

| 2011-2012 Trawl | | 2011-2012 Hook and Line | | |
|-----------------|----------------|-------------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Jan 20 - Apr 1 | 550 t | 1st trimester | Jan 1 - Jun 10 | 250 t |
| Apr 1 - Jul 1 | 400 t | 2nd trimester | Jun 10 - Sep 1 | 5 t |
| Jul 1 - Sep 1 | 600 t | 3rd trimester | Sept 1 - Dec 31 | 35 t |
| Sept 1 - Oct 1 | 150 t | | | |
| Oct 1 - Dec 31 | 300 t | DSR | Jan 1 - Dec 31 | 10 t |
| TOTAL | 2,000 t | | | 300 t |

| Trawl fishery categories | | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|--------------|----------------|
| Season | Shallow Water | Deep Water | Total |
| Jan 1 - Apr 1 | 450 t | 100 t | 550 t |
| Apr 1 - Jul 1 | 100 t | 300 t | 400 t |
| Jul 1 - Sep 1 | 200 t | 400 t | 600 t |
| Sept 1 - Oct 1 | 150 t | any rollover | 150 t |
| Oct 1 - Dec 31 | <i>no apportionment</i> | | 300 t |
| TOTAL | 900 t | 800 t | 2,000 t |